(b) if so, what are the details thereof and the follow-up action taken by Government in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI JANARDHAN POOJARI): (a) and (b) During the course of searches conducted by the Directorate of Enforcement (FERA) at the premises relating to Thapar Group of Industries, voluminous documents, *prima-facie* indicating violations of the provisions of F.E.R. Act, besides foreign currency of the value of Rs. 6,000 and Indian currency of Rs. 1,00,000 were seized. Shri Lalit Mohan Thapar, Chairman and Managing Director of M/s Ballar; pur Industries Ltd. and Director in other companies have admitted 15 charges and have tendered unconditional apology.

As the investigations are still in progress, in the interest of effective investigations, it is not expedient to disclose further details at this stage. Appropriate action under the law, as warranted by the result of investigations will be taken.

'Hawala' transactions

10. DR. (SHRIMATI) SAROJINI MAHISHI: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that of late 'Hawala' or 'parallel' banking transactions in the country have greatly increased;

(b) whether it is also a fact that mostly Non-resident Indian workers employed in the Gulf countries are involved in such transactions:

(c) whether it is also a fact that Non-Resident Investment ventures also use this channel; and

(d) if so, whether any appropriate corrective action has been initiated in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI JANARDHAN POOJARI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Separate lists are not maintained for cases of unauthorised foreign exchange transactions involving 'Non-resident Indian' Workers employed in the Gulf Countries and for cases of alleged 'Non-resident Investment Ventures'.

(d) The Enforcement Directorate (FERA) remains vigilant and takes appropriate action under the F.E.R. Act and where necessary under the COFEPOSA against foreign exchange racketeers. The drive against unauthorised foreign exchange transactions is a continuing process and is kept under constant review for adopting appropriate administratives/legislative measures to plug loopholes in the operation of the law.

Import of foodstuffs from the USSR

11. DR. BAPU KALDATE: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have been importing foodstuffs from the US.S.R. during the last three years;

(b) whether any of these foodstuffs, particularly dairy products have recently been imported into the country; and

(c) whether Government have taken any steps to ensure that no foodstuffs contaminate by radioactive fallout from the Chernobyl nuclear power plant disaster are imported into the country.

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. SHIV SHANKAR) : (a) and (b) No, Sir.

(c) As a precautionary measure samples of all foodstuffs coming from areas likely to be affected by the chernobyl accident are being tested at Bhabha Atomic Research Centre.

Vacancies of Non-official Members in Banks

12. DR. BAPU KALDATE : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a large number of nationalised banks are still without the non-official members on their Boards of Directors;

(b) if so, what are the names of these banks;

(c) since when these vacancies have not been filled up; and

(d) by when Government propose to fill these vacancies?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI JANARDHAN POOJARI) : (a) and (b) Vacancies of part-time non-official directors on the Boards of Directors exist in respect of all the 20 nationalised banks.

(c) Most of these vacancies have arisen since January, 1985.

(d) Action to identify suitable persons for nomination as part-time non-official directors on the Boards of nationalised banks is in hand and the endeavour is to complete the process soon.

Sino-Pak Agreement on Nuclear Cooperation

13. DR. BAPU KALDATE : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a Government spokesman made a remark on the recent agreement between Pakistan and China on Nuclear Cooperation as a frivolous agreement; and

(b) if so, whether Government consider that the remark of the spokesman of the Ministry accurately reflects the seriousness of Government over the agreement?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH) : (a) No spokesman of the Government of India made such a remark.

(b) Question does not arise.

Seizure of gold bars at Sahar International Airport

14. SHRI KAILASH PATI MISHRA:
SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR:
SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE:
SHRI SHANKER SINH VAGHELA:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that on August 8, 1986 Custom officials seized about 140 gold bars at Bombay's Sahar International Airport and apprehended three employees of the Soviet Airlines, Aeroflot;

(b) if so, what are the details in this regard; and

(c) what is the estimated value of gold smuggled into the country during each of the last three years and so far during the current year and through what channels?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI JANARDHAN POOJARI): (a) and (b) On 8th August, 1986, the officers of Customs Collectorate, Sahar Airport, Bombay, keeping a discreet watch over Aeroflot Flight No. SU-560 noticed two traffic agents of Aeroflot moving in a suspicious circumstances. On noticing the Customs Officers, one of the agents ran away leaving behind a folder in the passage of aero bridge. He was apprehended along with three other traffic agents. Examination of the abandoned folder resulted in the recovery and seizure of 140 gold bars of 10 tolas each of foreign origin collectively valued at Rs. 34.85 lakhs. Assorted foreign currencies equivalent to Rs. 7404 were also seized. In this connection, all the four persons were arrested.

(c) Report received by the Government and seizures made indicate that gold continues to be sensitive to smuggling into the country. Gold is smuggled by air, sea, land routes and through passengers in their baggage and on their person. Smuggling being a clandestine activity does not, by its very nature, lend itself